

Tabitha

& other poems

Jeremy James

1. Tabitha

Widows wept
where she slept,
the salt of the earth,
whom death rejected
when he knelt by her side
and said, "Arise."

2. Jonah

After his soul said *No!*
(with nowhere to hide)
he went sulking to the sea,
but the crew who knew
his testimony
disapproved
and threw him gingerly
over the side.

3. Pact

More than forty swore
to make war
on this little man
but day by day
they wasted away
and finally fell
to the floor.

4. Endor

She never expected a guest
like this,
a royal in the round,
weeping at her feet,
who in his pride
was hiding from God
while striving to peek
underground.

5. Manoah

When his wife got the news
he knew it was true
but what could he do?
To hear he would rear
an unusual child
was a little unreal –
truly, something to chew.

6. Herodias

A provocative dance
was all it took
to sever
his hairy head,
to answer his charge
with a silver charger,
borne with a look
that said,
“Whatever.”

7. Jephtha

His only child,
his heart's delight!
– blighted by a vow
that he shouldn't
have made
but thought he could
somehow.

8. Malta

The mother of all storms
tried and tried
to pulverize
this doughty lot,
but all it got
was an isle alive
with the One who died.

9. Lame since Birth

Leaping, if you don't mind,
leaping
like a hare
and running everywhere,
sharing this incredible news,
needling his critics
with tactless satisfaction
by expounding
this obvious fact.

10. Fishing

All night nothing
and now
– when he appears –
the whole sea
bubbles
with goodness.

11. Fire

Fifty came and fifty died,
Fried, fried, fried.
Fifty came and fifty died,
Fried, fried, fried.
And then at last
a man who asked
if his might still abide.

12. Nain

Her seven days of mourning
were deferred
when he sat up and uttered
a few words –
Who can remember what he said
or if he stuttered!
for no-one heard, really,
just the gentle way he stirred.

13. Jezebel

Leaving no seed
they left nonetheless
a legacy,
a vile witch
pitched with glee
from the balcony
– and eaten.

14. Pathway

An ass and a lion
stood waiting
side by side
when a prophet, a liar,
came to enquire
why they denied
their natural desire
and chose instead
to pass the time.

15. Goliath

How could this stripling
pack a punch
big enough
to dimple his chin?
It's simple really
when you realize
he had God on his side.

16. Sinking

Water can be awkward
when you walk on it.
We try to get by
by keeping dry,
but this man stepped out
(Don't mention the shout).

17. Lion

A peculiar home
for a honeycomb!
Who would have guessed?
Unless of course an inside source,
who would have known,
digressed.

18. The Last Adam

The whole of mankind
died beside a tree
and after many days
revived
when a Lamb survived
a similar catastrophe.

19. Thomas

Show me, show me,
he said
– their words were intangible –
unable to extend his creed
to believe
the most soothing news
imaginable.

20. Storm

While he is sleeping
the sky is railing
and waves are assailing
their precious vessel,
so they shake him awake,
these men
of little faith.

21. Naboth

In his eyes
it was a tiny slice
of paradise,
a land apart
that no map could chart,
until unbending envy
broke his heart.

22. Haman

Not a man to mess with.

A breed apart,
the kind who redefine
the art of darkness,
whose only thought
is fraught with distress
and the cry
of all mankind.

23. Tophet

When he smashed
the earthen flask
the assembled elders shook.
His oration may have hurt
but his warning
rang forth gloriously
when he struck
that wretched vessel.

24. *Chatsotserah* *

Gleaming silver tongues
gesticulating
in the sun
with long
imponderable songs,
whose holy notes
applaud
the very citadel of God.

* trumpets

25. Pharisee

How does one train
a gnat-strainer
or change his spots?
It would seem easier
to appease a weasel
or grasp an eel
than turn this strange
irregular wheel.

26. Patmos

On this slave-mining island
an old man scanned
the vast horizon of time
and spied therein
a denouement
far too cruel
to dwell upon.

27. Herod

Exceedingly devious
and unusually cruel,
nobody's fool,
a leader
chosen by Caesar
to deceive Judea
and fortify the Empire.

28. Fig Tree

When the miraculous happens
we expect a blessing
to attest
to His infinite mercy
but in this instance
something exceptional
manifested,
leaving us
with one tree less.

29. Abimelech

Abreast a tower in Thebez
he bled,
his skull busted
by a stone,
thrust from above,
which crushed his cranial bone
– and his followers fled.

30. Ehud

He brought a message
from God,
displayed on a blade,
and the hole he made
– before he took flight –
was a sight to behold
in a gilded cage.

31. Jonathan

Upon receiving a sign,
he was equipped to whip
the Philistine,
to skip up a cliff
in a jiffy
and shine.

32. Neighbors

How on earth
did he get on the roof?
And who let him down
through the tiles?
Oh, blessed are those
who know
these guys!

33. Father

He saw him from afar,
his sad nomadic son.
Oh what had he done?
Like a thief on the run
he had come to
hand himself in,
to acknowledge his sin
and sit once more at his door.

34. Ezekiel

They watched
as he lay on his side
for over a year,
sticking strictly
to his God-given diet,
but they wouldn't buy it.
Zion will abide, they cried,
or something
equally prickly.

35. Chest of Joash

Addressing neglect,
his method of collection
was infectious.
With no moving parts
it continually moved hearts
by sitting simply
where it sat.

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